



THE DUDDON AND FURNESS MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

Affiliated to The Lake District Search & Mountain Rescue Association and Mountain Rescue, England and Wales
Registered Charity 1173246

President: Peter Jackson MBE **Vice President:** David Hughes



Supporters' Newsletter – January 2026

The new base

Our first purpose-built base, after 64 years of old garages and unheated industrial units, has finally risen from the ground, currently on budget, albeit a huge one (£1.3M). We look forward to taking it over, probably in May 2026. We continue to be indebted to the many supporters who have contributed to it, individually or by holding events in 2025 (Ulverston Traditions Band Concert, CGP BBQ, Broughton Fireworks, Broughton Film Festival) or have undertaken sponsored events (Esmé and Ophelia aged 9 walked the Dales Way, and 'Ultra 3-Peaks' and 'Pennine Spine' challenges were undertaken); plus, we received a most significant donation in return for our continued support to the Fred Whitton Cycle Challenge.



We also received large grants from the Sir John Fisher Foundation, the Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association and the Frieda Scott Charitable Trust, with others due in 2026.

We have not just relied on outside support but as a team have supported or managed events with a view to funding the project and for normal running costs. These include: several of the above-mentioned events, car parking for the Malcolm Wilson Rally and 2 fell races (the latter courtesy of Gail and John Batton at the Newfield Inn), support to local fairs and shows, the Keswick to Barrow Walk and talks to a wide cross section of the community. All of these fundraising efforts have meant that with the usual support from many of you receiving this newsletter we should be able to cover the fit-out and normal running costs, with reserves towards 2 new vehicles, which will be needed in the not-too-distant future as our Land Rovers reach the age of 15 and 16. Many thanks to all those who have played a part in our fundraising, be that large or small.

Call-outs

These are now categorised as actual calls, usually via 999 and the Police or Ambulance service, or another team. Some of these result in a stand-by, which can last several hours and is disruptive to work or home life, some can be dealt with by limited resources, such as the drone party, and others result in a full team call-out. Looking at the full number of calls, in 2023 we had 84, 56 in 2024 and 51 in 2025. Of the 51, only 36 required the full team to be called out, with others resulting in a stand-by (6), not in our area or not relevant to our competencies, such as off-shore (2), or requiring limited action (7) including just the drone group. While this may appear fairly low compared to some teams, even generating a feeling of disappointment, it should be

celebrated as fewer lives being endangered.

In terms of the spread over the year the first 3 months were very quiet, possibly due to it being the driest and warmest Spring on record, with the first call-out actually dealing with casualties being in the first week of March.



Training

This continued throughout the year and 7 probationers have moved from training to mentored call-outs, with 3 moving to full-team status and 4 due to achieve this in March 2026. This brings us to full membership, having accepted more than usual new members in 2025 to offset a temporary non-availability of senior members for a variety of reasons. BAE Systems are thanked for funding 4 extra radios needed, from their 'Give as you Earn' scheme.

A taste of some of the call-outs

I'm often asked when I give talks on Mountain Rescue whether we get annoyed by those who venture out unprepared and ill-equipped. The quick answer is 'no' and if that will annoy you don't join a team. Our role is to deal with what we find, and hindsight will rarely help. Most walkers are well prepared and those who aren't are usually inexperienced rather than stupid. There were 2 call-outs this year that might have tested our patience. Both involved walkers climbing Scafell Pike. The first, a couple, left

Wasdale Head at 4pm in March without torches. On reaching Lingmel Col, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up, one decided it was too much so they split, one going up and one down, both getting lost in the fading light. We were tasked to search the Upper Esk and east side of the Pike. Both were eventually found and walked off. The second group, 3 young men, had a few pints at the Wasdale Head Inn before deciding to set off for the Pike at 9pm in the dark, in December and at the height of a named storm.



Near the summit one of them slipped and injured his knee. We were called at 5.20am to assist Wasdale MRT by bringing a stretcher and ropes to the casualty site for the evacuation. The usual route was barred by the beck being uncrossable, necessitating an open-fell climb and evacuation, with one casualty on a stretcher and 2 walking. We finally closed base at 1.15pm after what, for us, was an exciting call-out. Did they need reminding of their stupidity? Probably not.

Helicopter Assistance

During 2025, we were involved in 3 call-outs eased by the availability of Search & Rescue helicopters. The first, in May, followed a call at 5.45pm when 2 hill-party groups with rescue equipment were lifted in 2 runs to Broad Crag Col to a casualty with a broken ankle. The helicopter had already, with some difficulty, dropped off their paramedic at the site. While these helicopters can winch down to 200m, at that point the helicopter must be in clear air to hover and not be below the mountain ridges. The casualty was treated, packaged for a stretcher lift and evacuated by air, with team members walking off with the casualty's friend and 2 dogs, getting back to base at midnight. Ten days later and at 7.30pm we were called to search for a 12-year-old boy separated from his parents. Three of our hill-party groups were deployed along with the drone group and the lad was found below Cam Spout, having come off the Scafell ridge to the east, rather than the correct west, a common fault for those without a compass. Again, 2 of our groups were deployed by helicopter and the lad was reunited with his parents, courtesy of a night helicopter ride. We returned to base by 00.30am. The third was in September, on the night of the Wasdale team's annual dinner, when we were called at 2pm to rescue a teenager. He was with a group attempting to climb the very steep Lord's Rake, had slipped and injured his arm, and had suffered other possible injuries. Again, 2 of our hill-party groups, including crag members and 2 doctors, were lifted by helicopter to the site. The evacuation required a 180m stretcher-lower down to Hollow Stones, followed by a long carry-off down to Wasdale Head, with the stretcher and remainder of the group. We returned to base at 10pm.



Within our own area

There have been several quite complicated medical call-outs: a casualty who fell off the boardwalk above High Dam, with potential head, back and breathing issues; a casualty on the Fred Whitton Cycle Challenge on the descent from Wrynose Pass; a young man who collapsed on Kirkby Moor with an underlying heart condition; an elderly man who fell on Pike How, a difficult area to access above Hinning House at the top of the Duddon Valley – he had either dislocated or broken his elbow, a most painful injury needing great care with pain relief, immobilisation and stretcher evacuation; a short call-out to a female with an epileptic seizure at Ulpha in the Duddon, near to the home of the team doctor who was quickly on the scene; and a man above Cark with signs of vomiting, dizziness and mild hypothermia who was diagnosed with hypoglycaemia but turned out to have an inner ear infection.

Off the fells, there were 2 more broken ankles on the path coming off the top of Hoad Hill, by the Sir John Barrow lighthouse monument at Ulverston. The good news is that the Council have agreed, after several similar accidents, to replace the sloping concrete path with steps in the Spring of 2026. The year ended with another quadbike accident, this one near Bootle, resulting in a back injury.

Top Tip - Before setting out always ask yourself:

- 1) Do I have the right gear?
- 2) Do I know what the weather will be like?
- 3) Am I confident that I have the knowledge and skills for the day?

If the answer to all 3 is 'yes' then have a great day.

P.S. Always take a torch, map and compass in addition to your fully charged phone.

I hope I don't annoy anyone by sending hard copies but the income from secondary readership far exceeds the costs. When you have read it, please consider passing it on to another family member or leave it in the staff/coffee room at work.

